



**Chief's Update
December 4, 2014
"Run From The Cops 5K" Postponed**

Dear Tempe Police Employees,

Three years ago, the Tempe Police Department in partnership with The Tempe Police Foundation – a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization – designed an interactive, lighthearted and healthy family athletic event to bring together Tempe police employees and members of the community in a charitable 5k run known as the "Run From The Cops"; with many of our officers running the entire race in full uniform, as fellow runners encouraged and supported them as they attempted to achieve a difficult physical fitness challenge.

Since its inception, the event has gained in its popularity as a fun way for the Tempe community to connect with the police officers who are sworn to protect and serve them, while raising funds for the Tempe Police Foundation whose programs have assisted our department's K9 Unit, the families of fallen or injured Tempe Police Officers in times of need, providing for emergency travel and lodging expenses of crime victims and their families, sponsoring the annual 'Holiday Shop with a Cop' event benefitting the children of low-income families, supported diversity workshops, and sponsored trainings to assist officers with interacting with various segments of our community.

At the time – three years ago – when the race and its name were conceived, no one could have predicted the events of the future. Or, that the name of our event could be construed, and possibly misinterpreted, by some to mean the exact opposite of our intentions – to hold an event which brings the community and our police department together in support of one another.

As Chief of Police, it is incumbent upon me – as it is for every Tempe Police employee – to remain ever mindful of the needs of our community. Just as important, we must remain attuned to the national conversations taking place concerning the relationships between law enforcement and the American public.

After much consideration and deliberation, and with the consultation and support of the members of our department's Executive Team, I have determined that out of sensitivity, respect, and support for all sides of an important debate taking place all across our great country, it is necessary to proactively postpone this year's race. Though a difficult decision, I believe it is a necessary one as we - the employees of the Tempe Police Department – must always remain committed to doing what is right, what is just, and what is necessary for our community at all times – even if that means enduring an inconvenience.

Make no mistake, I recognize that a lot of time, energy, and work went into planning a great race, and truly appreciate the dedication of everyone involved to make sure this race was better than all the other previous races. Your continued support, understanding, and patience is greatly appreciated. Additional information regarding registration refunds will be forthcoming in the near future.

Finally, within the last hour, I received a letter [excerpt below] from Rev. Oscar Tillman, President of the Maricopa Branch of the NAACP thanking us for being proactive in postponing our event.

"...Having known and worked with you for a long time, both I and the NAACP have come to appreciate and respect you and the Tempe Police Department as a highly professional law enforcement agency committed to serving all segments of the community regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status. Additionally, the transparency with which you - and those under your command - consistently operate under, serves to not only strengthen existing relationships between the Tempe Police Department and the minority community, but breaks down the barriers which may stand in the way of building new relationships with others.

Well aware of the fine charitable work that the Tempe Police Foundation engages in, I both understand and support your proactive decision to postpone this year's event. Though I recognize the positives associated with the event - and the efforts undertaken over the past three years to develop the event to bring together members of law enforcement with the community they serve in a positive way - in light of what is taking place both locally and nationally, I was concerned that the name of the event, and the event itself, could be misconstrued and incorrectly interpreted by some who would fail to recognize what the event has been - and is - truly about.

Having been involved in the civil rights movement for more than 40 years, I know first-hand that when tensions between parties are high, it is best for everyone involved to take pause, assess, and engage in respectful and meaningful dialogue to achieve a positive outcome for everyone involved.

In closing, the NAACP values its relationship with the Tempe Police Department and I wish to thank you for your continued partnership - and more importantly your leadership - as it relates to understanding and taking proactive action on matters which impact both the minority community and the community at-large..."

In closing, we will continue to strive to develop meaningful and inclusive programs to connect Tempe Police employees with those we serve.

Stay Safe,

Tom Ryff
Chief of Police